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Chairman: Mr. Kiwanuka ..... (Uganda)

The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Agenda items 57, 58 and 60 to 73 (*continued*)

General debate on all disarmament and international security agenda items

Mr. Onobu (Nigeria): My delegation joins previous speakers in congratulating you, Sir, on your election as Chairman of the Committee. Our congratulations go also to the other officers of the Committee. We are confident that, as a result of your considerable diplomatic experience, our deliberations will be guided to a successful conclusion.

Disarmament and non-proliferation have been central to all efforts aimed at the maintenance of international peace and security since the establishment of the Organization. Nigeria, like other Member States, shared the hopes and ideals of a world devoid of the threat of weapons of mass destruction. For that reason, Nigeria has supported all efforts aimed at bringing about the reduction and eventual elimination of weapons of mass destruction, which pose the greatest threat to the survival of humanity. There is no doubt that the cold war was the harbinger of an unbridled arms race that has persisted to this day. The end of the cold war presented a good opportunity and an auspicious environment for the early conclusion of an agreement on general and complete disarmament under effective international control.

It is a matter of great regret that our hope for a nuclear-free world has failed to materialize and, indeed, is fast becoming forlorn as the world continues to witness an enormous increase and a qualitative improvement in weapons of mass destruction and their delivery systems. That has been further complicated by new threats in the form of the excessive accumulation of conventional arms, the proliferation of small arms and light weapons, the massive deployment of landmines in conflict areas and international terrorism. With the annual global military budget at a staggering $850 billion in a world where hundreds of millions of people earn less than one dollar a day, such expenditures are simply unconscionable. This situation calls for the urgent implementation of the action programme adopted at the International Conference on the Relationship between Disarmament and Development.

Today, a few countries have between them enough nuclear-weapons capability to destroy the world and to annihilate humanity — including themselves — several times over. New strategic doctrines are being proposed or embarked upon that will not improve the quality of human life, but will instead spark a new arms race whose only objective is the development or acquisition of new generations of weapons. We understand the immense feeling of power over non-nuclear-weapon States that the possession of nuclear weapons accords nuclear-weapon States; we also understand the danger it portends for both. It is important to note that, at a minimum, the pervasive presence of nuclear arms brings the world closer to a possible nuclear accident, if not to a nuclear conflagration.

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Fortunately, there is no lack of effort on the part of the international community to achieve genuine disarmament. The past decade alone witnessed the indefinite extension of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, the successful negotiation of the Chemical Weapons Convention and the conclusion of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), as well as the entry into force of the Ottawa Convention on anti-personnel landmines.

In spite of those efforts, and even as we are confronted with the danger of weapons of mass destruction and other types of weapons, divergent views as to the way forward continue to echo among delegations. Further progress on various issues under the disarmament agenda has stalled: the CTBT has not yet entered into force as a result of the failure to ratify it on the part of some Member States, in particular those States whose ratification is mandatory for its entry into force; the negotiations to conclude a compliance mechanism for the Biological Weapons Convention have been inconclusive; the Chemical Weapons Convention still lacks universality; the Conference on Disarmament, the only multilateral negotiating forum on disarmament, remains paralysed; the United Nations Disarmament Commission failed to meet this year, the fiftieth anniversary of its existence; and the negotiation of a fissile material cut-off treaty is still pending.

Global peace can be achieved only through multilaterally agreed, legally binding agreements that provide for a comprehensive monitoring and implementation mechanism. It must be recognized that any presumption to the indefinite possession of nuclear weapons on the part of some countries cannot be compatible with sustaining the non-proliferation regime or with the goal of preserving international peace and security. Nigeria believes that, unless the nuclear-weapon States show sufficient flexibility and a practical commitment with regard to nuclear disarmament, the overall disarmament process will continue to be paralysed.

As part of a continent that has suffered a great deal from the menace of landmines, Nigeria is totally committed to their elimination. In many post-conflict African countries, civilians, particularly women and children, cannot move around freely for fear of being maimed or killed by landmines. Even in the face of hunger and famine, available arable land cannot be cultivated due to the presence of such mines. The escalating proliferation and indiscriminate use of anti-personnel landmines throughout the world demands urgent action and attention.

We are delighted to note the tremendous success which the world community has achieved in the fight against landmines since the entry into force in 1999 of the Ottawa Convention. We are equally pleased with the outcome of the recent Fourth Meeting of States Parties, which took place in Geneva last month, in particular with the adoption of a number of measures and recommendations aimed at the full implementation of the Convention and at ensuring its universality. We call for further international assistance to support mine-action programmes in mine-affected countries. We note, with interest, the positive role that non-governmental organizations have continued to play in this area. We call on Member States that have not done so to accede to the Convention as early as possible.

Small arms and light weapons are a major cause of political instability in developing countries, especially those in Africa. We support the Programme of Action that emerged from the Conference on Small Arms held in this Room in July last year. We note, however, that the Conference failed to agree on the need to establish and maintain control over private ownership of small arms and to prevent the supply of small arms and light weapons to non-State actors.

As part of our efforts in the fight against the illicit proliferation of small arms and light weapons, Nigeria, together with South Africa, Mali, Kenya, Norway, Austria, Canada, Switzerland, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom, sponsored the African Conference on the Implementation of the United Nations Programme of Action on Small Arms: Needs and Partnerships, which took place in Pretoria, South Africa, from 18 to 21 March this year. For Nigeria and other participants, the Conference brought to the fore the compelling need to prevent, combat and eradicate the illicit proliferation of small arms and light weapons. I therefore reiterate the call by my President, Olusegun Obasanjo, for a legally binding international instrument to identify and trace illicit small arms and light weapons.

My delegation reaffirms its strong support for the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones on the basis of agreements freely arrived at among the States concerned. We remain committed to the African Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty — the Treaty of

Pelindaba. Similarly, we support the efforts of Member States currently parties to the Treaties of Tlatelolco, Rarotonga and Bangkok, and call on countries outside those Treaty bodies to join in the noble efforts to strengthen international peace and security. We welcome the recent announcement that the Central Asian States of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan have agreed to establish a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central Asia. In the same vein, we welcome the recent decision by Cuba to accede to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and to ratify the Treaty of Tlatelolco.

There is a need to preserve outer space as the common heritage of mankind, for peaceful purposes only. Despite the achievements of existing arms control agreements in regulating the activities of States in outer space, such agreements have been insufficient in arresting the deployment of other weapons of mass destruction in outer space. There is a need, therefore, for a legally binding international instrument to prohibit the deployment of weapons in outer space and to prevent the threat or use of force against outer space objects. In this regard, my delegation supports the joint proposal made at the Conference on Disarmament for the negotiation of such a legally binding instrument.

I am pleased to inform the Committee that this year, as in the past, my delegation will again sponsor a draft resolution on the United Nations Disarmament Fellowship Programme. Initiated in 1979, the Programme has benefited almost 600 participants from about 150 Member States. We appreciate the efforts of Member States which have provided, and continue to provide, resources and facilities for participants in the Programme. We also commend the Secretary-General for the able manner in which the Programme has been implemented over the years. We call on Member States to support the draft resolution when it is introduced.

Ms. Bonilla-Mérida (Guatemala) (*spoke in Spanish*): Allow me first of all, Sir, to congratulate you on your election as Chairman of the First Committee for this session of the General Assembly. I would also like to thank the other members of the Bureau. We have no doubt that, thanks to your experience and the keen interest you take in the issues that we deal with here, we will be able to make significant advances in the course of our work in this Committee.

We would like to thank the representative of Costa Rica for the statement that he made on behalf of the Rio Group, and associate ourselves with it. My delegation would like to take this opportunity to make some additional comments on the global outlook for disarmament and international security, as well as on the decisive role of the international community in determining future developments in that area. We shall, however, refrain from enumerating the issues that we all know to be the priority items on our agenda or from dwelling on what remains to be done.

I would like first of all to refer to the context in which we are undertaking our work. We have clearly entered a phase characterized by profound changes, both at the global level and within our societies. With the events of 11 September 2001, we entered a new era in international security that has created new challenges for the First Committee. Furthermore, those events strengthened our conviction that the struggle against terrorism requires that action be taken within each of our countries, complemented by action in the multilateral framework, within which both regional and global organizations have a fundamental role to play.

We can no longer speak of disarmament, therefore, without taking into account its relation to terrorism and the implications that each has for the other. The draft resolutions that have been adopted in this Committee and the legal instruments that have been adopted under United Nations auspices represent, now more than ever, the means by which the international community can carry forward its struggle in favour of international peace and security. This means that we must not only preserve the gains achieved, but enhance them through universal participation and implementation.

Secondly, we are aware of the fact that the impact of the events of 11 September has led to varying perceptions of the steps to be taken in the field of disarmament. Nonetheless, although ensuring global security is the top priority, we should not allow the fight against terrorism to justify any reversal of achievements made in the area of disarmament. To the contrary, the best way to respond to the new threats is by strengthening the commitments already made within the multilateral framework. Perhaps our greatest challenge is to muster the political will necessary to carry forward our initiatives in the sphere of disarmament. In other words, at this session we have a fresh opportunity to reaffirm the validity of the work of

the First Committee and of the commitments already made.

Thirdly, we live in a world where virtually every decision has transnational repercussions, and in which decisions at the national level have consequences in the international arena. It is therefore important to coordinate action at the national, regional and global levels in order to make headway on disarmament and international security. Now more than ever it is imperative that the manufacture and stockpiling of nuclear, chemical, biological and bacteriological weapons be ended. We must also review everything that relates to the manufacture, stockpiling, sale and circulation of conventional weapons, small arms and light weapons, anti-personnel mines, munitions and all explosive ordnance in order to prevent to the greatest extent possible their coming into the possession of the wrong persons and groups.

Finally, in the same line of thought, we believe necessary a more rigorous and effective application of the ample body of international legal norms in the area of disarmament that is found in conventions, protocols, agreements and other treaties already adopted within the United Nations system. We believe that the United Nations is the natural forum for ensuring international security and is the most appropriate body in which to determine the direction that global disarmament should take.

A year ago we began the work of the First Committee by undertaking in practice to redouble our efforts to ensure compliance with the norms to which we have already subscribed in the area of disarmament and to find ways to respond together to the dangers to which we are collectively exposed. Let us not lose our solidarity and the determination to take joint action that took hold of us following 11 September. Rather, let us revive those sentiments through the firm determination to enhance multilateralism in the area of disarmament. And let us work so that the First Committee can send a clear and principled message that commitments to disarmament must be rigorously adhered to in full respect of obligations and agreements on disarmament and that universal compliance is the main pillar of peace and international security.

Mr. Skračić (Croatia): Let me take this opportunity to congratulate you, Mr. Chairman, on your election to this most important position. We also extend our congratulations to the other officers of the Committee. Be assured that you have our full support in the execution of your duties.

Croatia shares the opinion of those who have expressed concern over the present state of affairs in disarmament negotiations. The Conference on Disarmament, the only multilateral negotiating body in the field of disarmament, is once again deadlocked. Negotiations on implementing a protocol to the Biological Weapons Convention abruptly came to an end almost a year ago. Meanwhile the chasm between the conflicting demands of the nuclear-weapons States themselves and between the demands separating nuclear and non-nuclear States is becoming ever wider, even as the number of States possessing nuclear weapons, albeit informally, is certainly getting larger.

How are we to overcome the shortfalls facing us? Certainly, a return to common goals and values is part of what is needed. Instead of holding to entrenched positions, as has been the case in the Conference on Disarmament for the last five years, we must see what is possible now and trust in the hope that progress achieved will lead to further progress down the line. In short, we fear that if no concrete action is imminent, the threat of stagnation and movement backward becomes ever more prominent.

For its own part, Croatia is continuously working toward the effective and timely implementation of all its international obligations. Croatia regularly reports to the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms here in New York. Recently, the Croatian parliament ratified amended Protocol II, on mines and booby traps, and Protocol IV, on blinding laser weapons, of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW). The parliament will be ready to submit its first report under amended Protocol II by the end of this year.

At the Second Review Conference of the CCW Convention, Croatia fully supported proposals for extending the scope of the Convention to internal conflicts by amending article 1 of the framework Convention, as well as supporting the establishment of an open-ended group of governmental experts with separate coordinators to discuss ways and means to address the issue of explosive remnants of war and to further explore the issue of mines other than anti-personnel mines.

On those specific issues, Croatia distributed a position paper at the second meeting of the expert

group in July this year. In short, on issues related to the explosive remnants of war, we support the principle of a systematic solution of this humanitarian problem through the establishment of a legally binding instrument. Even though more work is certainly needed on issues such as defining explosive remnants of war and the role of international humanitarian law as it relates to such explosive remnants, as well as defining whose responsibility it is to warn the civilian population and to clean explosive remnants of war following a conflict, we believe that the time is ripe for us to proceed with a negotiating mandate on this issue. Clearing explosive remnants of war should be an indisputable humanitarian obligation. Therefore, we will support moves towards the earliest possible conclusion of negotiations on this issue.

With regard to mines other than anti-personnel mines, Croatia still holds the position that they do not present the same humanitarian problem that anti-personnel mines do. They are not deployed in the same quantities as are anti-personnel mines and are easier to detect because of their size and material content. We support efforts in the framework of the Group of Governmental Experts to make all mines other than anti-personnel mines detectable, as well as raising the efficiency of self-deactivation, self-neutralization or self-destruction capabilities of all mines other than anti-personnel mines, be it through a new or an existing legal instrument.

Croatia actively participates in the work of the Ottawa Convention on anti-personnel mines, including through various formal and informal groups that operate within the scope of the Convention. At the Meeting of States Parties in September this year, Croatia, along with Australia, passed on the Co-Chairmanship of the Standing Committee on Stockpile Destruction to Romania and Switzerland. We wish them every success in the coming year, especially at this crucial time when the first deadlines under article IV of the Convention are about to expire. We thank States parties for their decision to once again appoint us to another two-year mandate as co-rapporteur and co-chairman, this time in the Standing Committee on Victim Assistance.

In regard to Ottawa Convention obligations, Croatia wishes to announce that it plans to fulfil its article IV obligation to destroy its stockpiles of anti-personnel mines on 23 October 2002. The event will be commemorated, and it is expected that many governmental and non-governmental observers will be present. Moreover, Croatia is planning to hold a seminar on humanitarian mine action to consider progress under the mine-ban treaties, in Dubrovnik directly following the stockpile destruction event. That seminar will focus not only on international aspects such as Ottawa Convention implementation, including international and non-governmental organization cooperation along these lines, but also on issues such as the development of new methods and technologies for demining, financing of demining programmes and education and raising awareness.

As part of its national efforts with respect to small arms, the Government of Croatia adopted a Farewell to Arms programme aimed at allowing its citizens the opportunity to return small arms and light weapons retained following the armed conflict in Croatia from 1991 to 1995. Thus far, the initiative has proved highly successful, and the vast majority of the explosive ordnance and small arms and light weapons handed in have already been destroyed, under the supervision of the Interior Ministry. Due to its success, the initiative has been extended to the end of December 2002.

On the implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), Croatia successfully hosted three inspection visits by Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) inspectors in the year 2000, and it regularly reports under Article XI of the CWC on its national defence programme against chemical warfare.

Croatia has added its support to the work of the OPCW by hosting a number of events. We hosted a World Congress on Chemical and Biological Terrorism in Dubrovnik in April 2001, which was a follow-up to a symposium entitled "Chemical and Biological War without Chemical and Biological Weapons", held in Zagreb in October 1998, during which a military exercise and demonstration were conducted. In September 2002 Croatia hosted the latest joint OPCW event — the First International Assistance and Delivery Exercise, according to Article X of the CWC. We thank all those who participated in this exercise and hope that its conclusions and lessons learned will go a long way towards helping to streamline response times and actions that may be triggered due to a possible activation of Article X of the Convention.

Croatia is also preparing an agreement with the OPCW on providing a radiological, biological and chemical (RBC) decontamination unit — at the disposal of the OPCW, in line with Article X of the CWC, by the end of this year.

Croatia was actively involved in the negotiations of the Ad Hoc Group of the States Parties to the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BTWC) on an implementing protocol for the BTWC. At the Fifth Review Conference of the BTWC, Croatia supported the continuation of the work of the Ad Hoc Group, on the basis of the Ad Hoc Group Chairman's composite text on a future protocol. Croatia expressed the opinion that a holistic approach was taken with the presentation of the Chairman's composite text, which attempted to bring together the different compromise positions debated over and offered in the course of the Ad Hoc Group's negotiations.

Croatia took the position that while work in several areas of the composite text may still have been required, especially with regard to future inspections and visits, with stronger provisions for the protection of commercial property information needed, it nevertheless provided an excellent opportunity to move towards bringing negotiations to their desired result — the adoption of a new Protocol whose primary goal was to ensure that biological agents are not used to the detriment of humankind.

Croatia will, along with its partners, work towards the successful conclusion of the reconvened Fifth Review Conference in November this year, including with the adoption of a strong final declaration. Also, Croatia has indicated that it will unilaterally support United States proposals on national implementation measures and legislation for BTWC implementation, although it shares the view of some other delegations that this presents political, not legal, obligations for States. For this reason, Croatia prefers the resumption of negotiations for a legally binding implementation protocol to the BTWC.

On nuclear issues, as a non-nuclear State party to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), Croatia adds its support to the goals contained in the New Agenda Initiative. We believe that it is only right that other non-nuclear NPT States parties should come together and call on nuclear-weapon States to abide by the obligations they themselves have agreed to implement through the Non-Proliferation Treaty. Croatia will be co-sponsoring this draft resolution again this year and calls on other States to do the same.

Conversely, with regard to the question of the establishment of new nuclear-weapon-free zones, Croatia cannot and will not support the establishment of such a zone in Central and Eastern Europe without the support and consent of the countries of this region. That is far from being the case at this time. We implore the sponsors of this initiative to undertake extensive consultations with the countries of this region before once again tabling an initiative that does not enjoy their support.

Like other Central and Eastern European countries, Croatia is preparing to downsize its military. In close cooperation with the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), a draft plan for the downsizing of the armed forces has been finalized. The new armed forces of Croatia should consist of approximately 25,000 personnel by the end of 2005 — a reduction of some 17,000 personnel. NATO has decided to support a comprehensive programme set up by the Croatian Government to retrain redundant military officers, as part of the defence reforms. The Croatian Separated Personnel Care and Transition Programme aims to provide support to all groups concerned, whether in developing individual transition plans, training personnel to face the job market or creating pre-identified jobs in the private sector or in other government agencies.

With regard to future international treaty negotiations, Croatia, as I stated earlier, believes that we should move forward one item at a time, do what is achievable and then move on to the next item. In this, Croatia shares the opinion of its European partners on the need to convene as soon as possible negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty in the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva. In this light, Croatia fully supports the recent initiative of Ambassadors Dembri, Lint, Reyes, Salander and Vega in the Conference on a proposal for a programme of work. We believe that this initiative takes into account the interests of all concerned parties and provides an excellent opportunity for us to get on with what we should be doing in the Conference on Disarmament.

Still on Conference issues, Croatia once again calls on Conference members to look closely at its expansion. Croatia has been on the waiting list for

membership for 10 years, and it seems that we are no closer to entering this body than we were when we first applied. We appeal to Conference members not to hold hostage the expansion issue to other, as-yet-unresolved problems faced in the Conference.

Finally, as part of its national security strategy, adopted in March this year, Croatia has expressed its readiness for, and interest in, the further modernization of its national legislation in terms of import/export controls through acceding to other international arrangements in the field of arms control. This includes acceding to the 1996 Wassenaar Arrangement on Export Controls for Conventional Arms and Dual-Use Goods and Technologies, the Australia Group on limiting the transfer of equipment used in the production of chemical or biological weapons agents, as well as the Missile Technology Control Regime, formed in 1987 by the G-7 economic partners.

Mr. Ikouebe (Congo) (*spoke in French*): Allow me, Sir, to join previous speakers in congratulating you on your election and on the outstanding work you have been doing as Chairman of the First Committee. My delegation would like to assure you of our full cooperation in ensuring that, at the end of our debates, we can offer the international community new prospects for peace and security, within the framework of the multilateral negotiations that need to be relaunched.

A year ago, in this very room, our work was strongly affected by the terrorist acts of 11 September 2001, which plunged the United States and many other countries into mourning. The spirit of solidarity shown on that occasion sent a message of genuine attachment to the values of multilateralism, because in the face of these acts, which completely changed our perception of the threat, it became clear that the only effective response is collective action backed by all the resources of international solidarity.

In the face of the very real threat of nuclear, biological and chemical terrorism, it became imperative for all to give priority interest to measures aimed at the eradication of weapons of mass destruction and to work towards the universalization of the various international instruments on disarmament, nuclear non-proliferation, the end of the arms race, and ensuring that the international community is firmly on the path of multilateralism.

In this context, we were expecting real breakthroughs. But today, the facts give less cause for optimism, as recognized by the Secretary-General, who stated, in paragraph 63 of his report on the work of the Organization, that there was "little international cooperation in multilateral forums on disarmament this past year".

On the contrary, unfortunate trends continue, such as the dizzying increase in military expenditure, which, according to the Department for Disarmament Affairs, today exceeds $800 billion annually — a 7 per cent increase in three years — and the proliferation of small arms, the very weapons that are fuelling current conflicts, estimated to number over 639 million throughout the world.

My delegation believes that there is cause, inter alia, to reactivate the Conference on Disarmament, the sole appropriate framework for multilateral negotiations on disarmament. At its future sessions, the Conference should strive for real progress, taking into account, among other things, the resolutions on disarmament adopted at the fifty-sixth session of the General Assembly. I would cite several of these that are pertinent, including the resolutions on effective international arrangements to assure non-nuclear-weapon states against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons; regional disarmament; conventional arms control at the regional and subregional levels; prohibition of the dumping of radioactive wastes; the total elimination of nuclear weapons; transparency in armaments; and the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use of Nuclear Weapons. We also welcome Cuba's adhesion to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and its decision to ratify the Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean. These are undeniably two strong signals favouring the establishment of a lasting climate of peace and security at the global level.

We cannot overemphasize the need for the international community to monitor the implementation of the Programme of Action adopted at the United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, held here in New York in July 2001. This category of weapons is responsible for the greatest loss of human lives throughout the world.

In this respect, we welcome the convening of the Fourth Meeting of the States Parties to the Ottawa

Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction. At that Meeting, held in Geneva from 16 to 20 September, the States parties decided, inter alia, to enhance efforts to achieve the Convention's humanitarian goals. This is an issue that affects many African peoples, particularly in Central Africa, where Angola, for example, having recently emerged from a long and murderous war, now faces the daily threat of landmines laid throughout its territory. The Congo, a neighbour of Angola that experienced its own lengthy war, attaches special interest to this issue. That is why, as a State party to the Ottawa Convention since 20 November 2000, the Congo recently submitted its first report in demonstration of its readiness to cooperate in this area.

As my country currently holds the chairmanship of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), it is my duty briefly to recall the main concerns of the 11 countries of the subregion in the spheres of peace, security, disarmament and the conditions for the establishment and consolidation of an era of stability in a region that has long and often been prey to tensions.

I wish first of all to stress that, since late last year, some glimmers of hope have emerged in most of these States, which had been seriously destabilized until then. In Burundi, Angola, the Congo — where the situation has been normalized for almost three years — the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Central African Republic and Chad, positive developments have been seen, though they remain to be consolidated. I would note the role and activities of one United Nations entity in the subregion in helping the States to adopt confidence-building measures to prevent, manage and settle disputes and to establish a climate of peace and security conducive to development. I refer to the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa.

In the face of the proliferation of crises and armed conflicts in the subregion — with the massive loss of human life, waves of refugees, displaced civilian populations and widespread destruction which they entail — and in the absence of a viable regional mechanism to respond effectively to these problems, the States members of ECCAS decided to solicit the assistance of the United Nations. The Organization responded positively by creating the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa in May 1992. The Committee was established to draft confidence-building measures among the States members, to encourage disarmament, to limit arms and to promote development in the Central African subregion. It was conceived as an instrument of preventive diplomacy designed to prevent conflicts among and within the member States.

Over the 10 years of its existence, the Committee has created important confidence-building measures, including the adoption in 1996 of a non-aggression pact; the adoption of texts governing the operations of a multinational force for Central Africa; and the creation of an early warning system and of the Council for Peace and Security in Central Africa. I would also point to the efforts of the Committee to promote democracy in the subregion through the creation of a subregional Parliament and the Subregional Centre for Human Rights and Democracy in Central Africa.

The Committee's greatest achievement, however, has been that of providing the States members of ECCAS with a framework in which they can meet regularly and discuss their respective situations and that of the subregion as a whole, regardless of the state of bilateral relations among them. The Committee has thus served as a framework for ongoing and lasting dialogue among the States members.

However, while the Committee's achievements in the elaboration of confidence-building measures are appreciable, the same cannot be said of measures on disarmament, arms control and development. One need only consider the number of deadly conflicts in the subregion in order to understand the gravity of the problems created by this situation. Millions of dollars are being spent every year on warfare.

This substantial military spending by countries with limited resources is an obstacle to the financing of development programmes. Even for those countries that are able to devote their scant remaining resources to development, the fact that they are perpetually at war certainly creates a security environment that is hardly conducive to the establishment of specific programmes. This lack of development leads in turn to the eruption of conflicts that entail an increase in military spending, impoverishment and rising insecurity.

That is why, on the occasion of the Committee's tenth anniversary, the States members of ECCAS, meeting in Kinshasa, recommitted themselves, inter

alia, to invigorating the activities of the Community, particularly those relating to the promotion of peace and security in the subregion; to pursuing and accelerating the accomplishment of the programme adopted by the Committee at its creation; and to implementing the Programme of Action adopted at the United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, held in July 2001 in New York.

On this last point, in its programme of work for 2002-2003, the Committee decided to organize the following activities: a workshop on the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms and the Standardized Instrument for Reporting Military Expenditures; a seminar on the implementation in Central Africa of the Programme of Action adopted at the Small Arms Conference; and the carrying out of a joint military exercise in Gabon, known as Biyongho 2003, relative to peacekeeping operations involving the armed forces of States members of ECCAS.

The countries of Central Africa recognize that peace and security in their subregion cannot be imposed from outside and depends above all on the will of the leaders and peoples of Central Africa. They are also aware that, given the economic difficulties facing most of these countries, it will be hard for them to achieve their goals without the support and assistance of the international community. That is why, on behalf of ECCAS, I take this opportunity to address our deep thanks to the international community — and to the United Nations in particular — for all the assistance it has provided us since the establishment of the Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa. I also urge the international community once again to assist us in carrying out the Committee's work programme for 2002-2003.

This is particularly critical now that glimmers of hope are emerging in the geopolitical context for a subregion that only awaits the re-establishment of peace, security and stability to give full expression to its human and natural potentials. Let us seize this unique moment to launch genuine action to consolidate peace.

Mrs. Pham Thi Nga (Viet Nam): On behalf of the Vietnamese delegation, I have the great honour to congratulate Ambassador Semakula Kiwanuka on assuming the chairmanship of the First Committee. I fully believe that, with his profound knowledge in the field of disarmament, he will skilfully guide the discussion of the First Committee to a successful outcome. My delegation's felicitations are also extended to the other officers of the Committee. We pay tribute to the Chairman's predecessor, Mr. André Erdös, for his excellent work with the First Committee last year.

My delegation is very grateful to Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs Jayantha Dhanapala for his comprehensive statement on the key issues facing the First Committee this year. While we fully support the statement to be made later by the representative of Myanmar on behalf of the member States of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), my delegation would like to comment on some issues that are of particular interest to my country.

General disarmament and arms control remains one of the highest priorities on this year's United Nations agenda. My country consistently advocates complete and total disarmament, especially with regard to the elimination of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons and other weapons of mass destruction. Viet Nam has ratified the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), which is the cornerstone of the global nuclear non-proliferation regime. We have also signed the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT).

With regard to the multilateral regime to promote general disarmament and arms control, my delegation notes with deep concern the fact that this year brought little progress in international cooperation on disarmament. The review of the Biological Weapons Convention was suspended until November 2002. The CTBT has still not entered into force. The Conference on Disarmament remains deadlocked on negotiations on nuclear disarmament. More tangible efforts are necessary in order to achieve complete disarmament.

Nuclear disarmament is the toughest hurdle on the way to complete disarmament. The NPT is a milestone in halting the global spread of nuclear proliferation and in promoting disarmament, but many provisions of the NPT Final Document agreed by consensus at the 2001 Review Conference have not been met. My delegation believes that all nuclear-weapon States must reaffirm their unequivocal commitment to the Treaty and fulfil their obligations

under article VI. They must bear the primary responsibility to halt the development, production and stockpiling of nuclear warheads and their delivery systems. We commend the signing of the United States-Russia Strategic Offensive Reductions Treaty on 24 May 2002. The decision of Cuba to accede to the NPT and to ratify the Treaty of Tlatelolco reflected Cuba's strong commitment to the disarmament issue and deserves our warmest felicitations.

The tragic events of 11 September 2001 were a wake-up call to all of us, giving rise to greater concern about the acquisition of weapons of mass destruction by terrorist groups. Therefore, we express our serious concern about the decision of one nuclear-weapon State to withdraw from the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty (ABM). This action contravenes the principle of the irreversibility of nuclear disarmament agreements and constitutes a threat to international peace and security.

The Vietnamese Government fully complies with the Programme of Action adopted by the 2001 United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. Vietnam exercises strict control over the manufacturing, stockpiling, transport and possession of small arms and light weapons within our jurisdiction. Viet Nam also actively participates in the cooperative framework of the World Customs Organization and the International Criminal Police Organization. Along with our ASEAN colleagues, we are also working to deal with transnational crimes and illegal arms flows. However, while we support global measures aimed at preventing illegal trafficking in weapons, those measures should, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations, in no way prevent States from exercising their right to self-defence and security in protecting their territorial integrity and political independence.

The Government of Viet Nam strongly supports the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones in all geographic regions. The establishment of such zones would contribute to ending the proliferation of nuclear weapons. That would be one positive step towards global nuclear disarmament, thereby contributing to regional and international peace and security. In that spirit, Viet Nam acceded to the Treaty on South-East Asia Nuclear Weapon Free Zone, which reflects the earnest aspiration of South-East Asian countries for peace and security. At this point, my delegation wishes to call upon nuclear-weapon States to ratify as soon as possible the protocol annexed to the Treaty so as to demonstrate their serious commitment to the goal of a nuclear-weapon-free world. We also commend Mongolia's decision to declare its nuclear-weapon-free status. We consider this a contribution to the establishment of a Central Asian nuclear-weapon-free zone.

We share the view of other speakers that the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva must be strengthened as a unique multinational forum for negotiating issues related to disarmament. We believe that disarmament efforts must be regulated by multilateral frameworks. We hope that the States concerned will do their utmost by demonstrating their political will to break the deadlock, thus making the Conference on Disarmament an effective instrument in the negotiations for a verifiable treaty banning the production of fissile materials for nuclear weapons.

Viet Nam attaches great importance to promoting international use of the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms in reporting military expenditures to increase transparency in armaments. Viet Nam annually provides the full information required under the Register.

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate that Viet Nam, as a member of the United Nations and the international community, has done, and will continue to do, its utmost to actively contribute to the work of the United Nations. Once again, I assure the Committee of my delegation's full cooperation and support.

Mr. Kpotsra (Togo) (*spoke in French*): Allow me, first of all, to warmly congratulate you, Mr. Chairman, on your election to the chairmanship of the First Committee. We would like to assure you of our full support in the discharge of your mandate. We are certain that, under your guidance, our deliberations will yield positive results. I would also like to congratulate Mr. Jayantha Dhanapala, Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, for his very detailed introductory statement at the start of our discussions and for the various reports and notes he has made available to the Committee.

Over 50 years after the establishment of the United Nations, the promotion of international peace and security — while being one of the primary reasons for the establishment of the Organization — continues to be at the forefront of our concerns. The progress made by the international community towards

comprehensive and complete disarmament and arms control, although praiseworthy, has not yet met our expectations. Our concerns are shared by the Secretary-General, who, in paragraph 63 of his report on the work of the Organization (A/57/1), highlighted the immobility and stagnation characterizing action at the international level last year with regard to achieving general and complete disarmament. Two years ago, the leaders of the world took advantage of the opportunity offered them by the Millennium Summit to state that they would "spare no effort to free our peoples from the scourge of war" and would "also seek to eliminate the dangers posed by weapons of mass destruction". (*resolution 55/2, para. 8*)

As we know, the phenomenon of the illicit trade in, and the proliferation of, small arms is a major concern to Africa, as that continent is the most fraught with conflict. Both individually and collectively, the African States have worked to eradicate this scourge above. Beyond the insecurity that they promote, small arms and light weapons have led to the phenomenon of ex-combatants in Africa, who — frequently as armed bands — engage in criminal activities that involve trafficking in arms, drugs and armed robbery in towns and on the roads, and are a constant threat to security and stability in countries that are just emerging from conflict.

For these reasons, Togo firmly believes that international solidarity and assistance must play a paramount role in peace-building activities. Otherwise, programmes aimed at disarmament, demobilization and reinsertion of ex-combatants, which must logically be an integral part of United Nations peacekeeping operations, can hardly achieve significant results.

Similarly, genuine and more consistent cooperation must be fashioned and developed in our work against anti-personnel landmines, which are a real obstacle to the rational utilization of land in areas where they have been laid.

While successive United Nations reports have indicated that the production of anti-personnel mines is declining, it can never be overemphasized that all landmine-producing countries must adhere to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction.

At this point, it is especially important to note that the role played by the Regional Centres for Peace and Disarmament in Asia, Africa, and Latin America is increasing. Their very nature means that these centres are called upon to support the efforts of States in the various regions to promote international peace and security by preparing confidence-building measures. As regards the Centre in Africa, which is situated in my country, it is disturbing to note that 10 years after its establishment there are still tremendous financial difficulties. Voluntary contributions are, unfortunately, slumping and are only dribbling in, despite many pledges, and do not meet operational and administrative costs. Paragraphs 52 through 60 of the report of the Office of the Internal Oversight Services on the disarmament programme confirm this view of the situation. Given the more active role being played by the Centre in peace-building and disarmament efforts in Africa, we feel the time has come for us to ask whether the operational and administrative expenses of the Lomé Centre should not simply be covered by the regular budget of the United Nations.

I would also like to take this opportunity to reiterate the deep gratitude of the Government of Togo to countries, organizations and foundations that give support to the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa.

For several years, now, Africa has demonstrated its determination to be self-sufficient, particularly by increasing the number of initiatives that will reinforce its capabilities to maintain peace and settle crises and conflicts. These efforts, especially the action taken under Chapter VIII of the United Nations Charter, have been heralded by the international community. In that connection, following the serious events that have just occurred in West Africa, the Secretary-General welcomed the peace initiatives undertaken by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) with a view to finding a peaceful outcome to the crisis in Côte d'Ivoire, and gave his assurance that the United Nations stood ready to support any regional efforts. We hope that this commitment will become a reality when the time comes. The bitter experience of my own country, in terms of the sacrifices that it made in deploying the Economic Community of West Africa States Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) in Guinea-Bissau in 1999 and hosting the talks that led to the conclusion of the Lomé Agreement on the Sierra Leone crisis, remain very much in our minds.

It has frequently been demonstrated that efforts by African themselves, made with the encouragement of the international community, have not been always been adequately supported in the financial and logistical areas.

The stockpiling of weapons of mass destruction (WMDs), especially the nuclear weapons that still exist, is another constant threat to international peace and security. We support the idea that nuclear disarmament must be an absolute priority. Nonetheless, Togo considers that everything must be done to reinforce strategic stability and efforts aimed at controlling the arms race in the long run. We must avoid allowing the arms race to extend to new areas. It is important to give sustained attention to the establishment and development of systems governing the non-proliferation of WMDs.

Togo considers that universal adherence to the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons Treaty (NPT) is a sine qua non for achieving nuclear disarmament. Accordingly, we call upon States that have not yet done so to become parties to this Treaty, which is the keystone of the non-proliferation regime for nuclear weapons. We welcome the decision just taken by the Cuban Government to adhere to the NPT and ratify the Treaty of Tlateloco in the near future.

As regards missiles, one can only regret the fact that the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty, a keystone in strategic stability, has just been denounced by one of the contracting parties. It is to be hoped that that denunciation will not lead to the dismantlement of the entire treaty framework that was established for arms control nor to an erosion in strategic stability. The signature on 24 May 2002 by the Russian and American Presidents of the Moscow Treaty on the reduction by those two countries in the deployment of their nuclear weapons seems to be an encouraging sign in this connection.

In the same vein, my delegation notes with satisfaction the conclusions of the report of the Group of Governmental Experts on missiles, which the Secretary-General is submitting to this session of the General Assembly.

A manifestation of terrorism in its most violent form can be seen in the events that occurred in the United States on 11 September 2001. They contributed to raising the awareness of the international community to new dangers threatening international peace and security. Clearly, civilian aircraft are now potential weapons of mass destruction, and appropriate international cooperation must be developed among all States to eliminate terrorism.

In this regard, we welcome the establishment of a worldwide coalition to find ways and means to eradicate terrorism, while strictly respecting the provisions of the United Nations Charter and fundamental freedoms. There must also be sharpened awareness in the world aimed at controlling conventional weapons and WMDs with the view to ensuring comprehensive disarmament. This is, indeed, Togo's deepest hope.

Mr. Al-Shamsi (United Arab Emirates) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset and on behalf of the United Arab Emirates, I wish to extend to you my sincerest congratulations on your election as the Chairman of this Committee, which plays a vital and important role in strengthening international security through the efforts and endeavours of the United Nations. We are confident that your diversified experience with regard to disarmament issues will effectively contribute to a consensus on disarmament and international security issues. On this occasion, I would like to wish you and the other members of the Bureau every success. I would also like to commend your predecessor on the excellent work he did during the previous session and to thank the Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs and his colleagues for their valuable efforts to enhance international cooperation in the fields of disarmament and international peace and security.

Mr. Al-Bader (Qatar), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.

Two years have passed since the adoption of the Millennium Summit Declaration, in which the heads of State or Government pledged to work together for a peaceful, secure and prosperous world. However, one year after the Declaration, the whole world was shocked by the terrorist attacks on the United States of America on 11 September 2001, which claimed the lives of more than 3,000 Americans and citizens of other nations. After those violent acts, the world realized two important facts: first, that the extent of destruction and death would have been much greater had nuclear or other weapons of mass destruction been used in them; and secondly, that more destructive than any weapon are the feelings of resentment, hatred and bitterness caused by war and conflict. Hence the

realization that the role of the United Nations in the areas of peace and disarmament is more important and more relevant today than ever before. The current regional and non-regional conflicts and the increasing violence around the world require that we renew our commitment to the role of international law, including disarmament conventions and treaties, to the limitation of weapons of mass destruction and to the elimination of the root causes of conflict.

Despite the progress achieved by the United Nations with regard to peacekeeping in some areas of conflict, more work must still be done by the Organization to maintain regional and international peace and security. Today, millions of people around the world live in danger as a result of the occupation of their territories by foreign forces or of extreme poverty, ethnic conflict or civil war. Unfortunately, no progress has been made towards solving their problems, which undermines efforts to enhance international peace and security. That situation is exacerbated by an increase in military expenditures and by a corresponding decline in expenditures on economic development, especially for the world's developing and least developed countries. The reports before the Committee on small arms and light weapons indicate that last year's global military expenditures amounted to $839 billion, surpassing the previous year's figure by $39 billion. The reports also confirm a growing increase in arms trafficking, much of which is directed at developing countries. That reveals the state of fear and insecurity prevailing in such countries, which leads them to stockpile weapons against possible attacks or threats of attacks, at the cost of the economic and humanitarian needs of their communities. That is compounded by the declared and undeclared race to acquire fissile material and nuclear, chemical and conventional weapons, which poses a direct threat to international peace and security and undermines the efforts of the United Nations and of other bodies in the areas of disarmament to ban the manufacture and proliferation of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons.

The United Arab Emirates, which rejects the arms race and the stockpiling of weapons as a policy of deterrence, urges the international community to develop a comprehensive international strategy based on the principles of international law and on the resolutions and conventions of the United Nations, which are founded on the principles of equality and respect for national sovereignty. We look with optimism to the agreement reached by the Group of Eight aimed at establishing an international partnership against the spread of weapons of mass destruction and their constituent materials, at addressing non-proliferation issues and at enhancing nuclear safeguards. We also call on United Nations Member States to endorse and promote disarmament Conventions — in particular the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) — so that they can enter into force after the accession of the required number of Member States. In addition, we call for the creation of an unconditional legal instrument to guarantee security for non-nuclear States and for the establishment of specialized mechanisms to follow up on the results of the Conference on Disarmament within a specific time frame, in accordance with article VI of the NPT.

In that context, we reaffirm the need to redouble our efforts to address issues related to missiles in all their aspects. Since missiles are used as a means of delivery of weapons of mass destruction, the limitation of fissile material is one of the fundamental elements of peacekeeping. Therefore, a globally accepted instrument must be established to address all concerns related to missiles.

The United Arab Emirates welcomes Iraq's acceptance of the return of United Nations weapons inspectors, which represents Iraq's commitment to United Nations resolutions and affirms the sovereignty of international law, strengthening security, peace and stability in the region. We look forward to international cooperation with regard to supporting the Iraqi step in order to save the region from the consequences of another war and to find a peaceful solution to the Iraqi question.

The Middle East is one of the most dangerous and tense regions in the world as a result of the suppression and the military terrorism carried out by an occupying State that possesses a superior military arsenal — in quality and quantity — of conventional and non-conventional weapons. In that context, the United Arab Emirates affirms that peace and security cannot be achieved in the region as long as Israel, the occupying Power, possesses nuclear weapons. Therefore, we call upon the international community — in particular the great Powers — to exert pressure on Israel to compel it to accede unconditionally to the NPT, as it is the only country in the region that has not yet done so, and to

urge Israel to abstain from producing nuclear weapons and to subject all its nuclear facilities to the safeguards of the International Atomic Energy Agency. This should be carried out in accordance with the resolutions of international legitimacy, including the resolutions of the Sixth Review Conference of the NPT, held in 2000, and, in particular, those related to the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone, especially in the Middle East. We also call on the international community to pressure Israel to refrain from the use of internationally proscribed and non-conventional weapons against Palestinian citizens in the occupied territories, which has caused the killing of many civilians and the maiming and disabling of dozens of persons, including children and women, in clear violation of international laws and norms.

The United Arab Emirates believes that engaging in dialogue to find political solutions is the ideal way to resolve disputes and differences. Therefore, we are following with grave concern the escalating tension between India and Pakistan, and we call upon both countries to exercise restraint and wise diplomacy and to settle their disputes through dialogue and other peaceful means in order to enhance regional stability and international peace.

The United Arab Emirates has always supported international efforts aimed at maintaining peace and at preventing armed conflicts in areas of tension throughout the world. My country has contributed to peacekeeping operations, the provision of relief assistance, the rebuilding of national institutions destroyed by war, and the removal of anti-personnel landmines in the occupied Palestinian territories, in Lebanon, Afghanistan, Kosovo and Somalia. We stress the importance of examining the political, economic, human and social causes of conflicts and of working within the framework of international and regional partnerships to uproot such causes and to create the political and economic conditions that will eliminate the causes of conflicts and establish peace and security.

Such joint partnerships are capable of ensuring the international peace and security that this Organization was established to maintain. But that will also require the commitment of the international community — especially the developed countries — to the principles of the Charter and the implementation of the provisions of international resolutions calling for the liberation of peoples from colonialism, respect for the right to self-determination and freedom, the provision of adequate living conditions that would produce human dignity, the implementation of development programmes and the provision of economic assistance to the poor and the least developed countries.

Mr. Rademaker (United States of America): I should like to congratulate the Chairman and the other members of the Bureau on their election to their responsible posts. I am confident that their collective experience and skill will serve us well in our important work. I wish to assure them of the support of my delegation in the discharge of their responsibilities.

I note with great satisfaction the approach of the tenth anniversary of the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms. The participation of more than 160 countries in the Register process makes it a truly global confidence-building measure, and I look forward to it becoming a universal measure in the years to come.

It is a great pleasure for me to speak in this Committee for the first time to discuss the approach of the United States to arms control and non-proliferation. Nowhere else in the world can as much arms control expertise and experience be found together in one room. I look forward to working with members, learning from them and making progress in confronting the challenges we face.

We meet at a time of both great promise and great danger. It is a time of promise because the two States with by far the largest stockpiles of nuclear weapons, recognizing that they are no longer adversaries, have decided to reduce their nuclear forces dramatically. It is a time of danger because the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction is increasing, and the terrorist attacks whose anniversary we recently commemorated make abundantly clear the threats that we will all face if terrorists gain access to such weapons. In speaking today, I would like to highlight the continuing importance of arms control in the light of both that promise and that danger.

The demise of communism in the former Soviet Union and the end of the cold war were among the most dramatic — and most positive — developments in international relations in the past half century. Not everyone appreciated the new opportunities presented by those developments, however, and many were reluctant to part with the familiar institutions of the cold war. It was widely predicted, for example, that the

Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty could not be ended without plunging the world into a new arms race.

We have proved over the past year, however, that those predictions were ill-founded. The ABM Treaty was amicably terminated, and the United States and Russia promptly agreed to implement the largest reduction ever in deployed nuclear forces.

The rapid negotiation by the United States and Russia of the Treaty on Strategic Offensive Reductions — the Moscow Treaty — and the accompanying Joint Declaration on the New Strategic Relationship, was made possible by the new strategic framework that President Bush constructed with Russia. In contrast with strategic arms control during the cold war, the negotiation of these agreements did not involve years of working out complicated limits, sub-limits and verification regimes; both countries agreed that such regimes were unnecessary in this Treaty. In a few short months, the United States and Russia were able to record in a formal, long-lasting Treaty the decisions each had made on the reduction of its strategic nuclear warheads.

The two parties thus put into legal form their respective commitments to each reduce, by several thousand, the number of deployed strategic nuclear warheads to between 1,700 and 2,200 by the end of 2012. These reductions represent a cut of about two thirds below current levels and far below cold-war figures.

At the same time, the United States and Russia agreed on a Joint Declaration which addresses broader aspects of the new strategic framework. It focuses on the closely linked threats of international terrorism and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and acknowledges the major improvements in the nature of the strategic relationship between the United States and Russia. It establishes a Consultative Group for Strategic Security, which held its first meeting two weeks ago in Washington. This body, which includes the ministers for foreign affairs and for defence of the two countries, will permit us to continue discussions to explore additional ways to enhance transparency and predictability.

In concluding the Moscow Treaty, the United States has once again taken steps in accordance with article VI of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT).

Regrettably, just as the world is turning away from the balance of terror between the super-Powers, we find ourselves confronted with a dramatically increased threat of terrorism. We Americans have seen first hand the havoc terrorists can wreak when armed with knives. We shudder to imagine how much more death and destruction they would seek to inflict if they chose to use weapons of mass destruction.

This is nothing less than a fight between civilization and barbarism. There are roles in this fight for the law-enforcement community, the military, public health workers and others. What the arms-control community can do is to strengthen the international framework to prevent weapons of mass destruction from falling into the hands of terrorists or into the hands of States that support terrorism as a matter of national policy. The arms-control community can also better enforce obligations undertaken in the existing frameworks. Obligations must be lived up to if they are to serve a useful purpose.

We believe that every country in the world should belong to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, the Biological Weapons Convention, and the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC); that every country belonging to them should fully comply with their provisions; and that the parties must hold one another accountable and take appropriate steps to deter violations.

The universal adoption of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Additional Protocol would give us greater assurance of compliance with the NPT. In that regard, I am pleased to report that earlier this year the President submitted to the United States Senate the United States Additional Protocol. Through IAEA safeguards and other means, the international community must sustain efforts to reduce the threat of the diversion of nuclear materials, equipment and technology.

The strong United States commitment to effective multilateral arms control is demonstrated by our actions over the past year with respect to the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW). When the United States and other parties to the CWC recognized that the OPCW was not being effectively administered, the politically expedient course would have been to remain silent while the CWC slowly atrophied. Indeed, many countries strongly counselled us to follow precisely such a

course. We chose instead, however, to initiate efforts to revitalize that organization. Now that the OPCW is under new leadership, we are confident that it can effectively enforce international norms with respect to chemical weapons, provided it receives sufficient support from the international community. Accordingly, the United States is making a voluntary contribution to the organization of some $2 million. In addition, we have decided to upgrade our diplomatic representation at the OPCW in The Hague. We urge other members to join us in making such voluntary contributions to the OPCW and in taking other steps to underscore international support for Director-General Pfirter as he begins to revitalize that important institution of multilateral arms control.

Measures to assist in verification of compliance are key features of most traditional arms control regimes, which often include provisions for declarations, inspections and even the establishment of implementation bodies. There are instances, such as in the case of biological weapons, where other approaches are more appropriate, but in general it is the policy of the United States to support fully the efforts of such organizations as the IAEA and the OPCW. The international community must use all means at its disposal to ensure not just that key multilateral arms control treaties are complied with, but also that we keep weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery out of the hands of terrorists and State sponsors of terrorists.

The United States will introduce a draft resolution at this session of the First Committee that reiterates the value that the international community places on compliance with arms control and Non-Proliferation Treaty regimes. In the past, similar resolutions have achieved unanimous support. In current circumstances, I hope we can count on no less.

Beyond the existing regimes, the United States has repeatedly expressed support for efforts to ban the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices. We support negotiations in the Conference on Disarmament of an fissile material cut-off treaty that would advance the security interests of the negotiating parties. The efforts by some Conference members to hold up progress on a matter which all agree is ripe for negotiation, in an attempt to force negotiations in unrelated areas, is a perversion of the consensus rule of the Conference. Persisting in these efforts most assuredly will not succeed in forcing the premature commencement of negotiations in other areas. The continued deadlock in the Conference will serve only to further marginalize it in international security affairs and to lead more nations to question the continued utility of the forum.

The terrorist threat has also forced us to focus renewed attention on radiological weapons. We must foreclose the possibility of terrorists' obtaining possession of radiological material and constructing a radiation-dispersion weapon or "dirty bomb." The IAEA and other bodies are working on ways of improving the physical control of such material.

I appreciate the hard work and commitment of First Committee representative in bringing forward more than 50 draft resolutions every year. But the grave new threats we presently face demonstrate the urgent need for actions on the part of each member State. The number of resolutions we push through every year will be of little comfort if our efforts fail to reverse the spread of weapons of mass destruction and do not prevent such weapons from falling into the wrong hands. The overriding goal of the United States, through our international arms control and non-proliferation efforts, is to make the world safer and more secure. I know it is a goal that Committee members share, and I look forward to working with all of them in this critical endeavour.

Mr. El Kadiri (Morocco) (*spoke in French*): Allow me, on behalf of the delegation of Morocco, to offer my sincere congratulations to the Chairman on his assumption to the chairmanship of this important Committee. Our congratulations go also to all of the members of the Bureau. They can be assured of the full cooperation of the Moroccan delegation in working to ensure a successful outcome to this session.

I should like also to pay particular tribute to Mr. Jayantha Dhanapala and to the staff of the Department for Disarmament Affairs for their ongoing support for the disarmament and international security issues that are dealt with here.

One year after the tragic events of 11 September, which plunged the entire international community into mourning and gave fresh impetus to international cooperation aimed at combating terrorism, it has become increasingly imperative to include an arms control and disarmament component in the elaboration of a comprehensive strategy for international security.

The new international context should also promote the culture of disarmament, which is an essential element in the prevention of conflicts and in the promotion of the values of peace throughout the world.

However, disarmament calls for the implementation of a comprehensive strategy that includes a reduction in military spending, the elimination of weapons of mass destruction and the control of classical and conventional weapons. All of this should go hand in hand with a determination to strengthen respect by all States for all of their commitments under disarmament and non-proliferation treaties and accords, as well as to ensure their effective implementation. The transparent and irreversible contribution of States in this process will strengthen the confidence-building measures that are necessary for the creation of a viable and credible multilateral regime in the area of disarmament and non-proliferation.

Furthermore, any partial, selective or circumstance-dictated disarmament — even if it had some positive aspects — would not be sufficient to meet the many challenges confronting international security, in particular the threat of weapons of mass destruction, which imperil the existence of humankind as a whole, and the illicit trade in small arms, which affects several regions of the world, fueling conflicts and hampering efforts aimed at sustainable development, in particular in Africa.

The efforts made over the past decade towards genuine disarmament should be continued, bearing in mind the new challenges facing the security of nations.

We would like on this occasion to express our satisfaction at the substantive work done so far in the disarmament field and in the field of non-proliferation, in particular with regard to nuclear weapons.

In this respect, we welcome the conclusion in Moscow, on 23 May 2002, of an agreement between the United States and Russian concerning a reduction in their strategic nuclear weapons. However, we believe that further efforts along these lines should be undertaken in a multilateral framework in order to bring about the total elimination of nuclear weapons, which remains the priority objective of our Organization.

Furthermore, we believe that the adoption in July 2001 by the international community of a Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects represents an important step this context. We continue to hope that the Programme of Action will lead to a binding legal regime in the years to come.

However, all of these achievements should not lead us to overlook the difficulties that continue to hinder the multilateral disarmament process, which is the primary concern of this Committee. Obstacles continue to exist with regard to the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) and to the adoption of a protocol to the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC).

Along these lines, it is regrettable that the Conference on Disarmament, which has to its credit some important legal instruments such as the Chemical Weapons Convention and the CTBT, has been paralysed for almost six years now.

We hope that this anachronistic situation will be resolved. In this regard, we believe that the convening of a fourth special session of the General Assembly on disarmament would be appropriate, allowing the entire multilateral disarmament effort to be rationalized.

The Kingdom of Morocco, a peace-loving country that has been historically open to the dialogue of cultures in the Mediterranean basin and in Africa, remains committed to the peaceful resolution of conflicts and has always placed its diplomacy at the service of peace, particularly in Africa, which suffered under colonialism and in the cold war. We seek to contribute positively to the consolidation of peace and security in our region and we are committed to the building of a Maghreb regional grouping that is stable and respectful of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all its five members.

In accordance with its policy focused firmly on general and complete disarmament, Morocco has ratified virtually all conventions and instruments in this sphere. We acceded this year to the Biological Weapons Convention and to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons, particularly its Protocol on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Mines, Booby Traps and Other Devices, as amended in 1996.

Morocco attaches particular importance to the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and believes that the universality of treaties on the non-proliferation of such weapons is absolutely essential,

given their potential danger to the entire world. Hence, Morocco appeals to all States that are not parties to these treaties to accede to them and thereby strengthen efforts to consolidate international peace and security.

Morocco believes that the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) is the cornerstone of the international non-proliferation regime and will continue to work for universal accession to it. In that regard, we welcome Cuba's recent decision to accede to the NPT and express our desire to see other countries do the same forthwith.

Morocco is convinced that nuclear-weapon-free zones contribute to the reduction of the nuclear threat. It was in that spirit that, in April 1996, we signed the Pelindaba Treaty creating the African nuclear-weapon-free zone and that we encourage the creation of such zones in other regions. In that respect, we welcome the conclusion of negotiations on the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central Asia.

Finally, Morocco is very keen to see the Middle East become a nuclear-weapon-free zone. The current situation there calls for the international community to devote special attention to efforts aimed at relaunching the Middle East peace process and at the creation of a zone free of weapons of mass destruction in that highly sensitive region. In this respect, it is deplorable to note that the establishment of such a zone continues to be blocked by a single State of that region — Israel — which is not yet a party to the NPT and refuses to subject its nuclear facilities to the comprehensive safeguards regime of the International Atomic Energy Agency.

Any analysis of the various issues related to disarmament requires an ongoing adaptation of our multilateral disarmament machinery so as to take the new international environment into consideration. We believe that the essential task of this Committee is to focus seriously on this issue with the utmost flexibility and consensus of all States, the relevant United Nations organs and non-governmental organizations. The wisdom of nations teaches that he who holds weapons will eventually use them. That is why disarmament remains the natural complement in the philosophy of the United Nations to the system of collective security established in San Francisco.

Mr. Atieh (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): I should like to express my pleasure to Mr. Semakula Kiwanuka on his election as Chairman of this Committee. I also congratulate the members of the Bureau on the trust that has been placed in them. We are confident that their abilities and vast experience will enable the Committee to complete its work in a constructive manner.

I also thank Mr. Dhanapala, Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, for his efforts to discharge his responsibilities in making the work of this Committee a success.

The Millennium Declaration affirmed the inadmissibility of manufacturing and stockpiling nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction and of threatening their use on any pretext. We must therefore strive to eradicate all such weapons through the commitment of all States Members of the United Nations to the Declaration.

One of the most important tasks to which this Committee must devote special attention is preventing double standards and the manipulation of the fates of peoples under various guises. At a time when some are denying the right of a people to defend its dignity, land and right to self-determination, these same parties are allowing others to stockpile and use all manner of weapons, heavy and light. They are also supplying the aggressor with weapons of all kinds and allowing it full use of their nuclear facilities and expertise in the manufacture of their own nuclear weapons.

Recently, there has been increased discussion of the seriousness of the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and of the possibility that international terrorists may acquire such weapons. It is well known that this danger is not restricted to a specific region, but threatens various regions of the world. It is regrettable that some international circles are undertaking an unjust campaign against Arab and Islamic countries, while ignoring others and turning a blind eye to Israel's possession of weapons of mass destruction, in particular a huge nuclear arsenal, and to its rejection of the establishment of the Middle East as a zone free of all weapons of mass destruction, above all nuclear weapons. This is occurring at a time when the countries of the region have declared their readiness to create such a zone in the Middle East.

Today more than ever before, we call for every effort to be made, under the auspices of the United Nations, to make our region a zone free from weapons of mass destruction, if we are really seeking to establish true peace and security in the region and the

world. We affirm that Arab States are prepared to establish such a zone, if Israel agrees and begins to place all its nuclear facilities under the International Atomic Energy Agency's full-scope safeguards regime, just as all other Arab and Islamic countries in the Middle East have done and in accordance with what was affirmed by the 1998 Durban Summit of the Non-Aligned Movement.

In that connection, my delegation welcomes the announcement by the Cuban Government of its accession to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), thereby making the Treaty more universal.

Moreover, Syria supports the holding of a fourth special session of the United Nations devoted to disarmament in order to review and assess the implementation of the conclusions reached by the first special session, held in 1978. Such a session would give us an opportunity to review the most important aspects of disarmament from a perspective that is more in line with the current international situation. It would also make it possible to mobilize international public opinion in favour of eliminating nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction as well as controlling and reducing conventional weapons.

In that regard, we would like to recall here the Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice of 8 July 1996 concerning the illegality of the use or the threat of use of nuclear weapons. The Court took account of

> "the unique characteristics of nuclear weapons, and in particular their destructive capacity, their capacity to cause untold human suffering, and their ability to cause damage to generations to come." (*A/51/218, annex, para. 36*)

The Court further noted that

> "The destructive power of nuclear weapons cannot be contained in either space or time. They have the potential to destroy all civilization and the entire ecosystem of the planet." (*ibid., para. 35*)

Syria follows with interest the issue of transparency in armaments as a whole. In that context, Syria would like to reaffirm the position of the Arab Group in that regard. Syria believes that it is necessary for the members of the United Nations to take into account issues of interest to Arab countries in discussions about this important aspect of the work of the Organization. The United Nations Register should include weapons of mass destruction, and nuclear weapons in particular. They should also take into account the current situation in the Middle East, the continuing Israeli occupation of Arab lands, Israel's acquisition of nuclear weapons and its refusal to place its nuclear facilities under full-scope IAEA safeguards. It should also be noted that Arab countries have not acquired nuclear weapons.

With regard to the issue of mines, Syria believes that steps should be taken to ease the danger posed by these weapons. Those steps should include identifying minefields and marking them appropriately to keep people from approaching them; recognizing the importance of exchanging de-mining expertise among States; making the parties responsible for laying mines also responsible for removing them and for providing complete maps to minefields at the end of hostilities, instead of at stages, in order to avoid the well-known harm these weapons cause; and providing humanitarian assistance to populations exposed to the danger posed by mines and depleted munitions.

Syria participated in the United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, which was held in New York from 9 to 20 July 2001. We would like to welcome in particular the paragraphs in the Programme of Action adopted by the Conference pertaining to peoples' rights to self-defence, to self-determination and to resist foreign occupation. My delegation believes that the Programme of Action represents a step in the right direction, despite the fact that it did not entirely fulfil every delegation's hopes and aspirations.

In conclusion, my delegation would like to reaffirm to the Committee its willingness to cooperate to achieve fruitful results in the work of the Committee and to attain our noble objectives of achieving nuclear disarmament in particular, as well as with regard to other weapons of mass destruction. By making our contribution to the maintenance of international peace and security we would be sparing our peoples the destructive scourge of war.

Mr. Kouamé (Côte d'Ivoire) (*spoke in French*): I would like to begin my statement by thanking the Mr. Chairman for giving me the floor to address the members of the First Committee in order to make the

international community aware of the events that have been taking place in my country for more than two weeks.

On the night of 18 to 19 September 2002, Côte d'Ivoire was the victim of violent aggression. At the beginning of the attack, the homes of the Ministers of State, Interior and Defence, as well as those of other officials, were attacked by heavy artillery. The headquarters of the police and anything of a military nature were also attacked by heavy artillery. Simultaneously, the strategic cities of Côte d'Ivoire were also victim of armed attacks by terrorists — that is, Abidjan, the economic capital; Bouaké, the interior capital; and Korhogo, the northern capital.

Those attacks of unprecedented violence caused loss of life and significant material destruction. Among the victims were the Minister of State, the Minister of the Interior and numerous army officers. As a result of those attacks, General Robert Gueï, the head of the former military junta, and his wife were also killed. The Minister for Sport was taken hostage as he was presiding over a sports ceremony in Bouaké. As of 26 September, the official casualty count stood at 270 killed and 300 injured. It was initially believed that this was a mutiny on the part of the army, but we realized from the targets, the ways and means employed, the diversity of nationalities of the assailants, and their statements to the foreign media that these were terrorist attacks designed to overthrow a democratically elected Government.

We would like to point out that these assailants used sophisticated weaponry that was not part of the arsenal of our armed forces. Moreover, they had considerable financial means that were used to forcibly or voluntarily recruit young people in the towns that the assailants had taken hostage in the past two weeks. Further still, we could see among the captured assailants some military men who had deserted the army in 2000 and had sought refuge abroad. There were also mercenaries that had been recruited from neighbouring English- and French-speaking countries, as well as a contingent from our army that was to be demobilized at the end of 2002.

As you can all see, this was an attempted coup d'état that cannot be justified, given the significant efforts and achievements that Côte d'Ivoire is making. Politically, as you know, the international community has welcomed the work that we have done in organizing a forum for national reconciliation for all Côte d'Ivoirians. On 5 August, this forum lead to the establishment of a broad Government that has taken into account the diversity of political believes in our country.

Economic reforms undertaken by our Government have enabled it to reduce the negative growth rate of -3 per cent in 2000 to -0.9 per cent in 2001 and a projected -0.1 or -0.2 per cent at the end of this year.

In our struggle against poverty, Côte d'Ivoire has been eager to become master of its own future and has cooperated in many different ways. So these have been shadowy hands that have tried to put their grasp on our country. We have tried to reform our public finances and eliminate poverty by establishing — something rare in Africa — universal health insurance and free schooling.

Diplomatically, a once-isolated Côte d'Ivoire was now regaining its place in the community of nations by meeting with donors and other States from around the world. All this was achieved by this democratically elected Government that has been the victim of aggression. Mercenaries, who were trained and supported from abroad, wish to eliminate it and destabilize the entire subregion, and even Africa as a whole, because Côte d'Ivoire is a peace-loving country with a 25 per cent foreign population.

It is in this context that we welcome the prompt reaction by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) which, in an emergency meeting organized in Accra, unanimously condemned this aggression and set up a mediation committee to negotiate with those who were guilty of this aggression — even though, at this point, we do not know who they are. They also wished to establish a buffer peace force.

Given this difficult situation, the loyalist forces did repel the assailants and liberated our economic capital, Abidjan. They now hold the towns of Bouaké and Khorogho and are in attempting to seize other towns in the country. They have about 40 per cent of the territory in Côte d'Ivoire. In a desire to maintain the safety of human life, the Government has promoted dialogue with a view to eliminating this hotbed of conflict. Contrary to allegations appearing in some media, the neighbourhoods that have been cleared by the security force contain both our own citizens as well

as foreigners. These neighbourhoods held arms caches and served as areas of refuge for the assailants who were the perpetrators of the attacks on 18 and 19 September.

On behalf of the valiant people of Côte d'Ivoire, I would like to avail myself to this lofty tribunal to thank the fraternal countries of ECOWAS, all African Countries and all friendly countries who, since the outbreak of this crisis, have tirelessly given us their support. We would like to thank France, the country of liberty, equality and fraternity for its support, as well as the United States of America, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and all other members of the Security Council. The people of Côte d'Ivoire extend their gratitude to all of them and thank them for having decided to support us during this difficult time. We solemnly appeal to the international community to do its utmost to assist Côte d'Ivoire to move beyond this difficult time that threatens to inflame West Africa and Africa as a whole.

The Acting Chairman (*spoke in Arabic*): That was the last speaker on the list of speakers for this morning. I now give the floor to the Secretary of the Committee.

Mr. Sattar (Secretary of the Committee): I have been requested to make the following announcement. There will be a panel discussion organized by the Department of Disarmament Affairs on the impact of 11 September 2001 on the disarmament agenda for the twenty-first century, from 1.15 p.m. to 2.45 p.m. today in this Conference Room. The feature speaker will be the Right Honourable Kim Campbell, former Prime Minister of Canada. The panellists will include Professor Thakur, Vice-Rector of the United Nations University; Dr. Ahlström, Deputy Director of the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute; and Ms. Rebecca Johnson, Executive Director of the Agronome Institute. All delegations, NGO representatives and United Nations staff are invited to attend.

The Acting Chairman: Before adjourning the meeting, I would like to remind the delegations that the dateline for submissions of draft resolution on all disarmament and international security agenda items is Thursday 10 October at 6 p.m. Delegations are urged to kindly submit their draft resolution as soon as possible, in order to enable the Secretariat to make them available as official documents to the Committee for the second phase of its work. Delegations are also requested to submit their draft resolutions in both hard copies and computer diskettes to ensure the processing of the text.

The meeting rose at 12.10 p.m.